

Step families

“Come here you kids, I’ve got something to tell you.”

“You know me and Steve are together, well he’s going to move here and stay with us now!”

“Is he going to bring his kids too?” “Because they can go to school with us!”

“Yeah—is that OK?”

“Yeah that will be deadly—but where are they going to sleep?”

Step families are usually decided by two adults who want to be together. People get together for a lot of different reasons like love, companionship, money, and necessity.

A mother or father might find they cannot live together any more. They may end the relationship and begin a new one with someone else. Some begin a new relationship if a partner has died.

While parents look forward to these changes, their kids may not share these positive feelings.

This building of a new partnership is an exciting but challenging time. It needs a lot of time, energy and hard work. There are many different kinds of step families and each has different strengths to build on and difficulties to deal with. There are other people involved, including the extended family. Every family and step family is unique. What works for some may not work for others.

What can it mean for your kids?

- They might have to move house.
- They might have to share their home with more people.
- They might have to change schools and make new friends.
- They might not be able to see the other parent as often as they’d like.

- They feel a sense of loss and may be sad.
- They may not even know what they really feel.

Not all kids will react in the same way to the loss of the old family and the beginnings of the new family.

- For some kids it can mean that any hope of their parents getting back together is over. Some kids might even feel that they have lost their parents to someone else.
- Kids might feel bad if they are choosing between parents and step-parents.
- Kids might have trouble letting go of old family rules and traditions and learning new ones.
- There might be difficulties for the kids and parents over contact and visiting times with the other parents.
- Kids need to know what the rules of the new family will be and what will happen if the rules are not followed. All kids need limits and guidance.
- Agreeing on limits and ways of guiding kids in step-families can be tricky. Make time to talk to your partner about your feelings and what the rules will be in your home.
- If kids play up, remember you are the grown up and have a responsibility to guide your kids. Discipline is about us teaching and kids learning. It does not mean hitting, which is what some parents think when they hear the word.

This tip sheet, along with the full set of Parenting WA guides, is available in electronic format at www.communities.wa.gov.au



These things might help

- Talk honestly with your partner and kids about all the new plans.
- Remember kids need time to grieve the loss of their family.
- Let your kids know things will be different and that it will take time to get used to the new changes.
- Listen to your kids and answer questions honestly.
- Don't speak badly about the other parent in front of the kids.
- Be fair and balance your attention and time with each kid.
- Allow each kid to have some privacy.
- Let kids have time to sort out their feelings.

Building a new family is exciting but needs a lot of time, energy and hard work.

Contacts

Parenting WA Line

A free 24/7 telephone information and support service for parents and children pre-birth up to 18 years.

t: 1800 654 432 (free call)

w: www.communities.wa.gov.au

Department for Communities Aboriginal Early Years – Best Start Program

Best Start is a state-wide program for Aboriginal parents and carers with young children from babies to five years old. Best Start Services are located in the following areas:

- Armadale t: 08 9399 6489
- Carnarvon t: 08 9941 2105
- Goldfields t: 08 9093 3795
- Hedland t: 08 9172 3599
- Mandurah t: 08 9583 9802
- Marble Bar t: 0427 013 144
- Midland t: 08 9274 9411
- Moora t: 08 9651 1294
- Mullewa t: 0408 844 196
- Narrogin t: 08 9881 6693
- Roebourne t: 0438 926 558
- South Lake t: 0427 013 141

w: www.communities.wa.gov.au

Ngala Helpline

Provides parenting information, strategies and referral to community resources for parents regarding early parenting concerns and direction to all other Ngala services.

t: (08) 9368 9368 Helpline

t: 1800 111 546 (country callers)

w: www.ngala.com.au

Mooritj Yarning

Mooritj Yarning is an Aboriginal-specific program of Relationships Australia WA. Services include counselling, yarning around a broad range of issues and other programs that Aboriginal community identify as useful: women's art and craft groups, children's traditional and contemporary dance and men's groups.

t: 1300 364 277

w: www.wa.relationships.com.au

Look under "Services we provide" and then look under "Aboriginal services".

The Raising Children Network

Helps parents with the day-to-day decisions of raising children and looking after their own needs.

w: www.raisingchildren.net.au



Aboriginal Health Services

Contact your local service for a range of health, medical and wellbeing services. Some have women's groups, men's groups and play groups.

COUNTRY:

Albany	Southern Aboriginal Corporation	t: 08 9842 7777
Broome	Regional Medical Centre	t: 08 9192 1338
	Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service Council	t: 08 9193 6043
	Milliya-Rumurra Aboriginal Corporation	t: 08 9192 1699
Bunbury	South West Aboriginal Medical Service	t: 08 9791 2779
Carnarvon	Carnarvon Aboriginal Medical Service	t: 08 9941 2499
Derby	Derby Aboriginal Medical Service	t: 08 9193 1090
Fitzroy Crossing	Marr-Worra-Worra	t: 08 9191 5089
Geraldton	Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Health Service	t: 08 9956 6555
Goldfields	Bega Garnbirringu Health Service	t: 08 9091 3199
Halls Creek	Yura Yungi Aboriginal Medical Service	t: 08 9172 0400
Jigalong	Puntukurna Aboriginal Medical Service	t: 08 9175 1027
Kununurra	Ord Valley Aboriginal Medical Service	t: 08 9168 1288
	Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation	t: 08 9168 1528
Onslow	Bindi Bindi Aboriginal Community	t: 08 9184 1086
Roebourne	Mawarnkarra Health Service Corporation	t: 08 9182 0850
South Hedland	Wirraka Maya Aboriginal Health Service	t: 08 9172 0400
Wiluna	Ngangganawili Aboriginal Community Health Centre	t: 08 9981 7063
Wyndham	Ngnowar Aerwah	t: 08 9161 1496

METROPOLITAN:

East Perth	Aboriginal Health Division (AHD)	t: 08 9222 4024
	Derbarl Yerrigan Aboriginal Health Service	t: 08 9421 3888
	Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service	t: 08 9221 1411
Mt Lawley	Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet	t: 08 9370 6109
Mirrabooka	Derbarl Yerrigan Aboriginal Health Service	t: 08 9344 0444
Maddington	Derbarl Yerrigan Aboriginal Health Service	t: 08 9452 5333
	Moorditch Curlongga	t: 08 9459 3049
Mt Claremont	Statewide Indigenous Mental Health Service	t: 08 9347 6600
Perth	Aboriginal Health Council of WA (AHCWA)	t: 08 9227 1631

This Guide uses 'he' and 'she' in turn.
Change to suit your child's sex.

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Parenting WA Guide Aboriginal 07



